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AUTHOR Hicks, Patricia Thandi
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ABSTRACT

A study explored the effectiveness of "rap music" as a method of instruction for urban preschool children. It was hypothesized that urban preschool children would learn more new content (10 unfamiliar names of body parts) in a classroom environment through the use of rap music for instruction, than would children who received instruction using conversational speech. Subjects, 40 three- and four-year-old Black and Hispanic children from four randomly selected preschools were divided into an experimental group and a control group. Two audio-visual instructional tapes containing the same content material were produced by the principal investigator, but the control group's tape omitted the rap music rhythms. A pretest and a posttest were administered to both groups. Results showed that the two groups differed significantly in terms of the average number of additional body parts that were learned. The rap music experimental group learned more, and the hypothesis was supported. Findings suggest that the use of rap music for instruction of urban preschool children facilitates practice and ultimately increases the child's learning capacity. (Tables of data are included. Appendixes include lyrics and production credits for the "body parts rap," a list of preschools used for research, copies of the pretest and posttest, as well as an extensive bibliography.) (NKA)

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PATRICIA THANDI HICKS

COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN ORAL RHYTHMIC STYLE OF COMMUNICATION (RAP MUSIC) AND LEARNING IN THE URBAN PRESCHOOL

© June , 1987

P.T. Hicks

ABSTRACT

There appears to be a gap in the research, in that there have not been any identifiable studies which refer to the use of music as an aid to facilitating rehearsal of that which may be presented for learning. This study explored the effectiveness of rap music as a method for instruction to urban preschool children. It examined rap music as a facilitator for practicing the names of ten unfamiliar body parts in a classroom environment, thereby facilitating learning.

In an experimental design, the control group (Y) received instruction through the use of conversational speech, and the experimental group (X) through the use of rap music. Both groups received the same content.

"Body Parts Rap for Preschool" audio-visual instructional tapes were used for treatment. Posttests were implemented one week following, and the results indicated that 55% of Group X participated in practice activities verses 15% in Group Y. It was inferred that the rap music motivated the children to practice. A t-test was used to compare mean differences of correct responses from both groups to the body parts addressed during treatment, and revealed a significant difference at the .05 level favoring Group X.

INTRODUCTION

Rap music, and what we believe to be it's ability to teach and efficaciously motivate children to practice the content presented is an area untouched in mass communication research. Rappers rap daily in the community, the radio plays rap music daily, and daily television commercials appeal to youth audiences through rap jingles which push product lines (Toop, 1984). Christenson & Lindlof (1984) found that young children actually do listen to the radio. "There is no question that children listen to audio media. To the young listener audio is music" p. 27). Urban preschool children are therefore very likely to be exposed to rap music on a consistent basis, and probably find the music enjoyable. The lyrics rhyme, have rhythm, and are repetitious. Consequently, they are easy to learn through daily practice which sometimes occurs from frequent exposure. According to Paris, Newman, and Jacobs (1985),

> ...Researchers have concentrated so much on the processes of remembering that they have ignored the purposes and contexts of memory as well as the social and motivational dynamics that contribute to children's learning how to remember strategically.

> ...Research on control processes that influence memory reveals how rehearsal, organization, and other mnemonic techniques alter the speed, accuracy, and efficiency with which information is accessed. (p. 84)

Using rap music as a didactic medium in the classroom environment would present the urban preschooler with a culturally familiar and positive presentation. The rhythmic style would bring more of the child's sociocultural background into play in the school environment. If presented well, the child may react to the instructional music in the same way as he/she does to popular rap music. There is a need for preschool educators and researchers to explore the potential rap music may have in the educational curriculum.

MUSIC IN THE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM

Based on a review of the last 15 years of ERIC, research pertaining to the effectiveness of using music in various subject areas proliferated during the 1970's. This decade appeared to mark a time when a lot of attention was focused on the relatively unexplored role music could play in the educational curriculum. Unfortunately, most of the literature, as it relates to

preschool age children, observes the use of audio and visual images together as mediums to induce learning. According to Christenson & Lindlof (1984) "Certainly within the context of children's uses and perceptions of media, the issues raised and data gathered have been overwhelmingly skewed toward television" (p. 1). "For these reasons, then, we [the researchers] must turn to other sorts of data in order to fill in the picture of audio in the lives of children" (pp. 4-5)

Research addressing music concentrates mostly on it's ability to motivate and stimulate the interests of students, and on its usage when integrated within the context of other subject areas. Yaakob (1969), reporting on music and reading, believes that auditory and visual discrimination must be integrated and that imitation, listening, word meanings, and relationships can be intensified through music. Cohen (1974) believes music can support and increase the attention of children in beginning reading programs. He adds that music and song work well in complementing the drama present in stories read by children. Doyle (1975) agrees with the researchers previously mentioned. He describes how the usage of popular singers and musicals encourages reading. Merrion (1981) notes how research has identified parallel

brain processes between music and reading, and that music and language parallels can be used effectively within an instructional program to collaborate in producing an integrated education. Sullivan (1979) researched the literature as it pertained to using music to teach reading. He concluded that "apparently some music programs have a facilitative effect on reading performance through their development of listening skills and attention span" (p. 1). Dwyer (1982) states,

> One of the best methods for gaining attention for a cause or idea is through finding or writing a song which becomes associated with the desired message. Contemporary and traditional songs can bring an aesthetic and often stirring dimension to instructional procedures. The songs can provide vividness often not attainable in words and pictures. (p. 29)

Cardarelli (1979) could probably provide assistance to those agreeing with Dwyer, for he offers "Twenty-One Ways to use Music in Teaching the Language Arts" in order to capitalize on children's interests. Some of his topics for activities include singing nonsense word songs, poetry-choral speaking, vocabulary building from words of a favorite song, and rhyming.

Nash (1974) and Wright (1977) stress group and class involvement as ideal for learning. Students become increasingly motivated as singing, movement, language, rhythm, and songs are integrated. Those attributes of music together, render a strong basis for a good language arts program. Lane (1981) looks specifically at country music as an effective motivational vehicle to teach language arts. She concludes that since contemporary country music has a story to tell, the lyrics can be used in the same way as traditional material in reading instruction.

Literature which centers more specifically around the use of music in the development of language and cognition have been written by Burns, Bruman, & Lowe (1971), who feel that music yields opportunities to foster creative expression, writing, language and literature. They too agree that musical activities can develop related language arts skills. McDonald (1975) notes how language and cognition can be developed using music because of music's characteristic of repeating words. Livo (1975) took a close look at children's literature illustrating various types of songs. Her conclusions agreed with those of McDonald. She infers that singing would be a good technique for promoting

language development because of repetition, and also because of the familiar patterns of speech that usually accompany songs. Klink (1975) and McLullich (1981) suggest that music provides another dimension of word reinforcement, which will more than likely improve the child's language skills.

According to Brunk & Denton (1982), "Extant literature reveals abundant thought and practice for integrating music with other subject matter; however, there is little empirical evidence for the efficacy of combining music with other subjects" (p. 2). It is for this reason that they conducted a study to validate a curriculum which integrated social studies, science, and musical concepts for first graders in terms of learner achievement. Data was obtained from 568 young learners in public schools and the results of the study reveal a significant difference between group performances in the subjects, favoring the learner experiencing the integrative approach.

Stratton & Zalanowski (1985) conducted a study using 64 subjects from an introductory psychology course. Twenty-seven males and 37 females volunteered, and the average age was 21.5. Paired associate memory was tested with imagery and repetition instructions, with and

without background music. It was found that music had no effect with imagery instructions, but significantly improved performance with repetition instructions. Within the two instructional situations introduced, music was also found to have different effects on the relationship between cognitive style and imagery.

In 1981, Get Ready Incorporated, along with a team of educators, began to explore the effects of using rap music along with follow-up supplemental activities as motivational tools for learning. They developed a series of taped audio rhythmic training programs targeted to elementary and secondary grade level students. A pilot study was conducted by Get Ready using fourth grade students using their "Eight Parts of Speech Language Arts Program." Pretest and posttest results and comparisons indicated a significant increase in the children's knowledge of the eight parts of speech after being introduced to the oral rhythmic tape and accompanying materials. The posttest was administered four weeks after the pretest and introduction to "Eight Parts of Speech." Approximately 15-18 thirty minute class periods and follow-up activities were used as reinforcement to the information provided in the tape. "New York Tries Street-Talking" (1986) responded to Get Ready

Incorporated and quoted a twelve year old Manhattan student as saying, "If I can learn most rap songs in two days, I can learn the school stuff from these tapes just as fast" (p. 37). This sought to explain how accurate the assessment of the power of rap really was.

STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIS

On the basis of the literature reviewed, it is being hypothesized that urban preschool children learn more novel content in a classroom environment through the use of rap music for instruction, than do children who receive instruction using conversational speech. It is the oral rhythmic style of instruction that facilitates practice, which ultimately facilitates learning.

METHODS

Ten unfamiliar body parts known to three and four year old urban preschool children were selected for instruction using rap music for the experimental group, and conversational speech for the control group. These body parts were selected based on the results of a pilot study conducted in 1986, using a sample of three and four year old urban preschool children from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Subjects in the pilot were asked to name 32 body parts as they were pointed to on a poster board by the principal investigator. Subjects were tested on an individual basis, and based on their responses the ten least familiar body parts were extracted from the list of 32 presented. The body parts extracted include the following:

knuckles	ankles
wrists	waist
calves	armpits
thighs	shoulders
buttocks	eyelashes

Forty 3 and 4 year old urban preschool children comprised the two groups of subjects used for this study. Ninety percent were Black and 4% Hispanic. Twenty children from two preschools composed the experimental group (X); the 20 more children in the control group (Y) were from the remaining two schools. There were the same number of boys as girls in each group, although in Group X, 13 of the subjects were 4 years old and 7 were 3, and in Group Y, 16 of the subjects were 4 years old and 4 were 3. Schools were randomly assigned group membership based on the toss of a die.

Parents/Guardians were forwarded a formal letter and

consent form introducing the principal investigator and identifying all objectives and procedures relating. Only children with signed consent forms were included in the study.

Description and Development of Instruments

Two audio-visual instructional tapes (BPRP) were produced by the principal investigator. This was necessary because no such audio-visual materials currently exist. The lyrics on both instructional tapes address the ten least familiar body parts identified in the pilot study, and elicit verbal and physical responses from the children. The children were not only instructed to name and point to the body parts being introduced, but were also asked to participate in the repetition of key phrases during the instruction period.

Audio for the control group (Y) included the same exact content material and was presented using the exact same format as it was for the experimental group (X); however, the contemporary Rap Music rhythms were omitted from the presentation. Group Y responded directly to everyday conversational speech, while Group X responded to an oral rhythmic style of communication.

The video for both groups introduced a Black male

educator who was specifically trained to implement procedures pertaining to this study. Because the audio instructed the children to emulate a teacher pointing to and naming the body parts being addressed, the video served only to eliminate any variables which may be associated with the uniqueness of each individual teacher's instructional techniques. The video provided consistency and stability, thereby increasing the internal validity of the study itself. Each instrument provided between seven and eight minutes of instruction.

Pretest and posttest examinations were administered to subjects using the same procedures. The tests were introduced as a game and the children did not receive any feedback in the duration, other than that they were playing the game well. Children were tested on an individual basis in an isolated room of their school. They were asked to name body parts pointed to on their body and simultaneously pointed to on a poster board picture of a child's body. As a part of posttest procedures the children were asked, in addition, whether they remembered what they saw and heard on the BPRP television program. The principal investigator asked each child to either sing or recite the lyrics to BPRP if they remembered them. Responses were coded as P

(practiced) or N (non-practice). Coding was based on what the subjects were able to repeat.

RESULTS

Four classes were treated as two groups in the study. Pretest results in Table 1 compare the mean number of correct responses provided by both groups, and show no significant difference at the .05 level of significance between the means of XA and XB or between the means of YA and YB. Groups X and Y comprised subjects equal to each other in terms of their performance on the pretest. The computed "t" statistic supports acceptance of the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance (HO: $u_1 - u_2 = 0$).

Posttest results in Table 1 show no significant difference at the .05 level of significance between the mean differences of XA and XB or of YA and YB. However, mean differences between X and Y are significantly different. The computed "t" statistic supports rejecting the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance (HO: $u_1 - u_2 = 0$). This computed statistic suggest that the two groups (X and Y) differ significantly in terms of the average number of additional body parts that were learned following

treatment. The results favor the group that received rap music for instruction, which is Group X. The alternative hypothesis has therefore been accepted (HA: $u_1 - u_2 > 0$).

TABLE 1: Means and Mean Differences

Experimental and Control Groups

Pretest

Groups	n	Mean(SD)	t	t(X-Y)
Experimental (X)				
A	13	2.538(1.898)	t=0.854 D.F.=18	
B	7	1.857(1.214)	p>.05	t=1.64 D.F.=38 p>=.05
Control (Y)				
A	10	1.9(1.523)	t=1.4 D.F.=18	
B	10	1.2(0.421)	p>.05	

TABLE 1: Means and Mean Differences

Experimental and Control Groups (con't)

Posttest

Groups	n	Mean Diff. Pre/Posttest Correct Responses	t	t(X-Y)
Experimental (X)				
A	13	5.230(1.786)	t=0.615 D.F.=18 p>.05	
B	7	4.714(1.799)		
				t=5.888 D.F.=38 p<.05
Control (Y)				
A	10	1.9(1.791)	t=0 D.F.=18 p>.05	
B	10	1.9(1.523)		

DISCUSSION

It may be convincingly argued that the use of rap music for instruction to urban preschool children facilitates practice, and ultimately increase the child's learning capacity. This study serves to provide a strong reference to the positive effects of this dynamic oral rhythmic style of communication when utilized as an integral part of the early childhood educational curriculum.

Rap music for instruction is effective among urban preschool children. Rap is not only verbal, but is naturally physical because of it's level of intensity as a communication art form. Both attributes play key roles for reasons to use rap music as an instrument to facilitate learning/retention. Richard Held's carefully controlled experiments (cited in Arnoff, 1980), exhibit a learning phenomenon called "reafference." This phenomenon "clarifies how learning can result from the child's physical enactment of the on-going stimulus" (p.2). With reference to this study, the subjects were physically involved throughout the BPRP instructional tape.

How the lyrics are designed is just as important when presented for instruction using rap music. While

rhyme, repetition, and the call and response style are all essential qualities of the lyrics, the lyrics must in addition be focused and directly address the skill being taught. They are complemented by rap's provocative and familiar rhythm which assists in directing the preschooler's attention to the content, and thereupon reinforces self-initiated practice activities with peers for learning. According to Herbert (1981) in his abstract, "Learning retention is dependent on the amount of learning involved, the directness of the experience, and the number of senses involved." The rap music used for instruction in this study was direct, and involved the sense of hearing, the sense of seeing, and the sense of touching.

The rhythm within the rap music has appeared to make the significant difference in the results obtained from this investigation. All other things included in the treatment for both groups were essentially equal. We argue that it is the rhythm introduced in the BPRP tape presented to Group X that served to attract the attention of and served as a motivator to the urban preschool child to engage in the learning process.

Children seek a rhythm when they speak. According to Nash (1974) rhythm plays a very important part in the

child's development of language. It provides them with comfort and confidence in their newly developing usage of language. The child feels a sense of mastery and accomplishment when words begin to flow in his/her language. The rhythm and mnemonic style of presentation in BPRP allowed this exercise with language to take place, and thereupon excitement emerged within the preschool child. Expectancy became a major point (McDonald, 1975) for the child developed a schema, or more probably reinforced an already existing schema for the song. This led to his/her desire to practice.

Children at this age always want to practice that which has been fun learning, and also that which reinforces those things that are to some degree already familiar to them. The monolithic drum machine beat in rap music is familiar to the urban preschool child. It is a part of his/her cultural experience outside of school, and he/she can positively relate to it's very physical, energetic, emotional, repetitive, rhyme and rhythmic mode of presentation from the outset. In the school setting the teacher is the child's model, outside of school he/she observes neighbors, brothers and sisters, and/or those who may live in surrounding communities as models. Social interaction and exposure

to rap outside of school serve as motivators for learning using rap in school.

It may be concluded that through the use of this oral ryhthmic style of communication (rap music), urban preschool children can learn novel content to a greater extent than can preschool children exposed to the same novel content for instruction, via conversational speech. This is attributed to the characteristics of rap which stimulate self-initiated practice, and ultimately facilitate learning. This mode of presentation can be very valuable to the early childhood educator, for it might conceivably be used to reach a great variety of behavioral objectives encountered. This mode of presentation should be an asset to any curriculum because of the qualities which have been discussed.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research project is rich in it's heuristic potential because it addresses a relatively unexplored area of mass communication research - rap music. Although the results of this study reveal positive gains in learning when rap music is used to teach urban preschool children, there is a need for studies to be done in other urban settings as well to verify these findings. A study

investigating the effects of rap music in suburban areas may also be suggested. Such a study would indicate whether or not this oral rhythmic style of communication is effective cross-culturally. Exploring the effectiveness of rap music for instruction in a variety of subject areas would provide additional insights about the utility of this communication style. Extended work may begin to explore the variety of sound effects used in conjunction with the lyrics in contemporary "street" rap music today. The novelty of these effects may serve as another tool which can be used to stimulate interest in novel content for youth.

The use of educational videos is a fairly new and innovative means of reaching youth for educational purposes outside as well as inside of school settings. Research questions are plentiful in this area, and a project that investigates the effects of using acclaimed rap artists in the music industry, along with graphics and realistic video from the urban communities where rap is popular, may provide similar insights into the cultural basis of learning. According to McCullaugh (1986), familiar characters, and presumably familiar people, attract children. In any event, "licensed characters are moving over to make room for more

original, interactive and educational/interactive kid vid" (p. k4). McCullaugh continues and notes that the children's video market has strong potential, and promises to command a growing slice of the growing market. If such is the case, researching the effectiveness of entertainment/educational rap videos can provide valuable information to those that produce and use them. Different variables that contribute to the learning of specific content could be investigated. Rap music as it may be used in the educational curriculum is, as noted, robust in it's ability to generate inquiry. Because rap music remains relatively untouched by research, all that Rap Music has to offer remains to be discovered.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A: Lyrics for "Body Parts Rap for Preschool"

Say Hi, Say Ho, to every girl and boy!
Let's all get ready for learning,
Let's put away the toys.

Today we'll learn about body parts.
We'll point and learn, you'll see.
Look closely at the T.V., and listen to me.

The body parts that you don't know,
After this game you will.
So come on all you boys and girls,
Come on, let's have a thrill.

We're learning body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.
Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.

Close your hand and make a fist,
Your knuckles you will see.
Point to your knuckles, that's the way.
Point to them just like me.
Everybody say knuckles. Point to your knuckes.
Say knuckles, Point to your knuckes.

Your knuckes help you close your hand,
So you can make a fist.
To move your closed hands up and down,
You need to move your wrists.
Say wrists. Point to your wrists.
Say wrists. Point to your wrists.

To find you calves is difficult.
Make sure you know the place.
That's good, very good, you've found your calves,
Now we can close this case.
Say calves. Point to your calves.
Say calves. Point to your calves.

Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.
Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.

Now feel right up above your knee,
Look down and you will see.
Part of your legs they're called your thighs,
You have thighs like me.
Your thighs. Everybody say thighs.
Your thighs. Everybody say thighs.

When you sit, down you sit right on your buttocks,
Yes it's true.
Your buttocks, that's the proper name.
I have buttocks too.
Say buttocks. Point to your buttocks.
Say buttocks. Point to your buttocks.

VERY GOOD!

Now look way down, not to your feet.
Cause then you've gone to far.
Feel on the left, and on the right,
That's where you're ankles are.
Everybody say ankles. Point to your ankles.
Say ankles. Point to your ankles.

We're learning body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.
Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.

Between your stomach and your back,
Your sides, they make your waist.
Put both hands there, let's see, let's see.
Make sure you've found the place.
Say waist. Hands on your waist.
Say waist. Hands on your waist.

Now put your hands under your arm,
Your hands there you must touch.
Your armpits, touch your armpits.
Now that was easy enough.
Say armpits. Touch your armpits.
Say armpits. Touch your armpits.

Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.
Body parts, body parts
Come on, let's learn our body parts.

Keep right on up your arm to the top,

To the neck, there just below.
You'll find your shoulders, boys and girls,
That body part you know.
Let me hear you say shoulders.
Point to your shoulders.
Say shoulders. Point to your shoulders.

And now my favorite body part, my rapping will address.
I blink them with my eyes, my eyes,
They are my eyelashes.
Blink your eyelashes. Blink your eyelashes.
Eyelashes. Blink your eyelashes.

Were learning body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.
Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.

So let's review our body parts.
We'll point and say each name.
Now that we know our body parts,
Come on, let's start the game.

Here we go!

Touch your ankles.
Point to your knuckles.
And now your calves.
Point to your thighs.
Everybody say buttocks.
Hands on your waist.
Point to your wrist.
Now your armpits.
Hands on your shoulders.
Blink your eyelashes.

VERY GOOD!

Body parts, body parts.
Come on, lets learn our body parts.
Body parts, body parts.
Come on, let's learn our body parts.

Just ask your teacher because she knows,
If you are right or wrong.
She knows the body parts we've learned,
Here in our rapping song.
Body parts, body parts. Now we know our body parts!!!

APPENDIX B: "Body Parts Rap for Preschool" Production Credits

PRODUCER/ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.....Patricia T. Hicks

DIRECTOR.....Ronald Simmons

ASSOCIATE PRODUCER.....Morris C. Whitaker

ELECTRONIC GRAPHICS.....Joy Tate

EDITOR.....Anthony Johnson

CREATIVE CONSULTANT.....William Harper

SONG WRITER.....Patricia T. Hicks

SONG EDITOR.....Morris C. Whitaker

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APPENDIX C: Preschool Center Sites used for Research

1. Capitol East Children's Center
   315 G. Street, S.E.
   Washington, D.C. 20003
   Director: Judith Fisher
   202/546-6966

2. Fantasia Early Learning Academy
   2340 Ainger Place, S.E.
   Washington, D.C. 20020
   Director: Dr. Rosa L. Trapp-Dukes
   202/889-1588

3. Gap Community Child Center
   Marie Reid School
   2300 Champlain Street, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20009
   Director: Monica Guyot
   202/387-5528

4. Nation House Watoto School
   700 Park Road, N.W.
   Washington, D.C. 20010
   Director: Agyei Akoto
   202/291-5600

APPENDIX D: Pretest/Posttest Response Form

Child's Letter____

Male/Female_____

Age/Birthdate_____

Preschool_____

Pretest Date_____, Posttest Date_____

Correct Response (CR), Incorrect Response (IR)

Practice (P), Non-Practice (NP)

	Pretest		Posttest	
BODY PARTS	CR	IR	CR	IR
Calves	___	___	___	___
Wrists	___	___	___	___
Thighs	___	___	___	___
Armpits	___	___	___	___
Shoulders	___	___	___	___
Eyelashes	___	___	___	___
Knuckles	___	___	___	___
Buttocks	___	___	___	___
Ankles	___	___	___	___
Waist	___	___	___	___

*Posttest Only: Do you remember what you saw and heard on the BPRP T.V. Program? Sing/Say the words for me.

Did you ever sing/say the words with friends? P___ N___

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